

INSTRUCTIONS

TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF TUAM.

By JOSIAH HORT, *N*

LATE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM,

AT HIS

PRIMARY VISITATION

HELD THERE

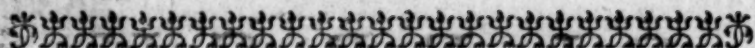
ON WEDNESDAY, JULY VIII, MDCCXLII.

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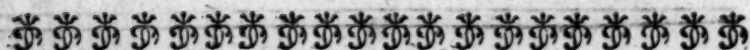
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THE Person who caused this CHARGE
to be reprinted, designed it more par-
ticularly for the Use of the younger
Clergy, and heartily wishes they may
carefully attend to the Directions and
Admonitions contained therein. And
therefore to render it more exten-
sively useful, the Distributors earnest-
ly request that every one, when he
hath read this Book, would be so kind
as to lend it to his Neighbour.





INSTRUCTIONS

TO THE

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OF THE

DIOCESE of TUAM, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

THE providence of God having called me to the government of this diocese, I have judged it not improper for me, to communicate my thoughts to you with regard to the execution of your ministerial office, in order to the edification and salvation of the souls respectively committed to your charge.

To this end I shall reduce what I have to say to you, under two general heads.

The *first* relates to your conduct, in the actual performance of divine offices in the house of God.

The *second* relates to your behaviour at large towards your parishioners.

In speaking to the former, I shall confine myself to these four branches of your office, namely, Preaching, Praying, Catechising, and Expounding the holy Scriptures.

I shall begin with *Preaching*, which is one of those means appointed by our Saviour, for the enlightening the minds, awakening the consciences, and reforming the manners of your hearers. In order to answer these great ends, some degree of skill and address, as well as of pains and study, will be requisite: And I shall, for the sake chiefly of such of you as have not been long in holy orders communicate my sentiments with regard to the *subject*, the *composition*, the *style*, and the *pronunciation* of a sermon. -

The subject of a sermon ought to be some point of doctrine that is necessary for a christian to know; or some duty that is necessary for him to practise, in order to his salvation.

I speak

I speak this in opposition to subtil questions and curious speculations, that are above the common level of the auditory, and which have often no other effect, than to disquiet the minds and consciences of those who do not rightly understand them; and if they please curious and itching ears, yet will edify no man in faith and a good life.

Upon this occasion I would recommend it, to young preachers especially, to compose a set of sermons upon the chief articles of the christian religion, according to their natural order and dependence. By this means they will improve their own knowledge at the same time that they are teaching their hearers: But this should be done in the plainest and easiest manner, laying aside metaphysical niceties and the jargon of the schools, and especially avoiding to explain mysteries; for this is generally giving words and terms without meaning; and no man has ever succeeded in the attempt.

When a useful subject is chosen, the next care of the preacher is to find out some proper and pertinent text, that will naturally lead him to pursue his subject, and that will yield him those doctrines and practical de-

ductions which he had in his view, without force and torture. For want of this, the whole operation will be laborious, obscure, and perplexed to the composer; and the discourse will be void of that perspicuity, which is necessary to engage the attention of the hearers. And I am sure there is no want of such texts upon all subjects, in the Bible.

It has given me disgust to observe in some preachers a certain affectation of choosing such texts as appear remote and foreign to their subject, that by this means they may have opportunity of shewing their wit and ingenuity in fetching that out of a text, which nobody imagined could be in it. They would do something miraculous, like bringing water out of a dry rock in the wilderness, in order to surprize their auditory; but this will ever give distaste to good judges, and there is no occasion for putting one text upon the rack, to make it speak that which would naturally and easily arise out of another, that might as well have been chosen in the room of it.

When a useful subject, and a pertinent text are chosen, the next work is *composition*, or the ranging of such thoughts as naturally arise

arise upon the subject, into a convenient order and method, this will be the plan of his discourse, and the composer will reap no small advantages from this practice.

First, As it will help him to enter all his loose and detached thoughts in their proper places, for want of which some of them may escape him when he comes to the finishing part.

Secondly, It will lead him to break his sermon into heads, which is absolutely necessary for giving strength and clearness to the whole, and for engaging the attention of the audience; which will be soon blunted and tired with hearing an harangue where all the parts are run into one general mass, and nothing distinctly and specially offered to the understanding.

Thirdly, The memory of the hearers will be greatly relieved; for a sermon thus broken into particular heads will be better imprinted, and more easily recollected, by reason of the dependence and connection of the parts, where one draws another after it like the links of a chain.

And *lastly*, It will give the preacher an opportunity of interspersing apt texts of
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holy scripture for the support, or illustration of every particular head.

There may indeed be a faulty extreme on this hand ; for I have heard a sermon that has been so overloaded with texts of scripture, that the thread of the reasoning was in a manner lost, and the whole looked like a piece of rich patch-work, without any ground appearing at the bottom. But the other extreme, of a penury of sacred texts, prevails too much in our modern and refined compositions ; which, for that reason, may rather be called *orations* than sermons.

A due medium therefore ought to be observed in this case ; but of the two, the latter extreme is most blameable ; for a sermon will appear lean and unsatisfying to a religious palate, when it is not sufficiently larded with scripture, but the whole is made to rest on the reasonings of the preacher, unsupported by the authority of God's word.

By this means likewise he will become an expert *textuary*, which is the first excellency of a christian divine ; and the people will occasionally be made acquainted with the holy scriptures.

Now

Now this is what I call a *sermon*, in contradistinction to an *oration*, which by one uniform flow of eloquence, without proper breaks and divisions, glides like a smooth stream over the soul, leaving no traces behind it. The word thus delicately sown, may, like a concert of music, delight the ear while it lasts, but dies with the sound, and the hearer will carry little home, besides a remembrance that he was sweetly entertained.

The effect of this will, where there are any kind of talents for it, be a *good stile*; by which I would be understood to mean *That simplicity and propriety of language, which clearly conveys the sense of the speaker into the mind of the hearer*. When therefore, by the method before prescribed, the preacher is become master of his subject, and has ranged all his materials fitly, fit words and expressions will readily offer themselves to answer to his clear ideas; for nothing perplexes the *stile*, but a confused and perplexed manner of thinking.

He therefore who would convince and persuade his hearers, should above all things aim at that perspicuity and simplicity, which

are the greatest ornaments of language : Whereas, on the contrary, a tawdry stile, garnished with flowers of rhetoric, and flights of fancy, which are incident to young preachers, makes only a bright confusion, that glares upon the mind without enlightening it.

As to the *doctrinal* part of a sermon, the stile cannot be too plain and chaste, though it need not descend to be base and vulgar, (for there is a wide difference between these two) because it is addressed to the understanding ; but as the *practical part* is designed to move the affections and passions, the stile may rise, and grow warm with some heightenings of imagination, the better to answer that purpose.

I have only two short remarks to add on this head. The first relates to the *introduction*, the second to the *conclusion* of a sermon.

As to the former, if an introduction be necessary, it should always be short, pertinent, and leading as soon as may be to the main subject of the discourse. If the text needs any light from what goes before and follows it, this should be collected, and brought to bear upon the text with the utmost

most brevity and clearness; for people are naturally impatient to know what the minister would be at, and to have him take his main business in hand. When I hear a preacher set out with a general preamble, that has no immediate relation to his text, and can never carry him to it but by a mighty circumference, I easily conclude with myself what I am to expect in the sequel of the discourse.

With regard to the conclusion of a sermon, it should be always practical, and persuasive to a good life; it should consist of exhortations and motives proper to enforce such duties and virtues as may pertinently arise from the doctrines and positions before laid down. For the great end of preaching is to make men better: Mere knowledge put into the head, if it does not penetrate to the heart, and from thence diffuse itself into the life and conversation, becomes not only useless, but hurtful, as it will turn to a man's greater condemnation.

I shall dismiss this general head with some remarks upon the subject of *pronunciation* or *elocution*. And here I must observe to you, that no one manner of pronunciation will besit

besit every sermon, nor every part of the same sermon, but that it must be diversified according to the nature of every period ; it is impossible therefore to give precise rules where so great a variety of circumstances will arise, which require a different modification of voice and action ; but every preacher must, in a good degree, be left to the direction of his own judgment, and the best examples.

All that I shall therefore attempt under this head, is to propose some general rules that will extend to all cases, and that may be of use for correcting some common faults and mistakes.

The first is, to pronounce every word and syllable distinctly, and to beware of sinking at the close of the period. This is undoubtedly the first and chiefest excellence of pronunciation, because the very end of speaking is so far lost, as it is not distinctly heard.

I would not be here understood to recommend that heavy and phlegmatic delivery that retails out words by their syllables ; for this is more properly to be called *spelling* than speaking, and is apt to tire men's patience and lull them to sleep ; but I mean that *articulate expression*, with rests and pauses properly

properly interposed, which shall break, and distinguish the parts of a period according to the sense; and herein consists the propriety and beauty of elocution, which both speaker and hearer will sensibly enjoy.

This rule is calculated for the cure of two faults that are not unfrequent; one is a *thick* and *confused delivery*, which runs syllables and words into one mass, so that the ear cannot well separate them, and the hearer is forced to make up the sense by conjecture. The other is a *rapidity* of speech, which runs off too fast to impress any distinct idea on the mind, by which means both the pleasure and profit of a sermon are in great measure lost. A little time and practice will certainly cure this fault, where there is no natural defect in the organs.

The *second* rule I would mention is, to be careful not to exceed the compass of the voice. There is a certain *ne plus ultra* to the organs of speech in every man, and his own *feeling* alone can teach him where it lies; if he goes beyond this, his pronunciation will be harsh, unmusical, and disagreeable both to himself and to his hearers, who cannot receive with pleasure what they perceive he delivers

delivers with pain and violence; besides, that it is impossible for him duly to temper and govern his voice under these unnatural strainings and efforts.

It is a great mistake to imagine that a voice must needs be well heard, merely because it is *loud*. This is indeed a noble foundation for art and skill to work upon, but without the aid of these, it is often *swallowed up* and lost in itself.

A moderate strength of voice, with a due articulation of words, and distinction of pauses, will go further, even in a large congregation, than the *thunder* of an unskilful tongue; and this is that *Suaviloquentia*, that mellowness and sweetness of speaking, so much praised in some of the *Roman* orators, in opposition to the rusticity of noisy declaimers.

Let me here add, by way of caution, the danger of forcing and straining the internal organs. I wish I were not an unhappy example of this kind, and that I did not to this day feel the sad effects of making too violent efforts in the pulpit, many years ago: From my own experience therefore let me advise young preachers, who have not the most robust lungs, to have recourse to art
and

and management, rather than to force, for supplying that defect.

The *third* rule I would recommend to you, is, to observe one *even* and *uniform* manner of pronunciation; I would not be here understood to mean, that a preacher is to confine himself to one simple *note* or sound, or to one degree of *time* and *motion*, from the beginning to the end of his discourse; for this is that *monotonia*, or *unaquedam spiritus ac soni intentio*, which the great teacher of *Roman* oratory explodes. It would be most absurd to do this, unless every thought, and every occasion were perfectly alike. The spirit and beauty, and I may say the very essence of pronunciation, lies in proper *emphases* and accents, and in varying the *notes* and *times* pursuant to the diversity of sentiments and occasions.

But I am levelling this rule against that *subsultory* way of delivery, that rises like a storm in one part of the period, and presently sinks into a dead calm that will scarce reach the ear. I allow that elevations, and softenings of the voice, judiciously managed, are both ornamental and useful, but those sudden starts and explosions are most ungraceful,

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graceful, and unbecoming the gravity of the pulpit ; and are of no use, that I can think of, unless it be to startle a hearer, that happens to be asleep ; and the other extreme of *sinking* below the ear, is still more ridiculous ; for words which cannot be heard, may as well not be spoken.

The *fourth* and last general rule I would suggest, is, to distinguish carefully between the *doctrinal* and *practical* part of the discourse, in the manner of your pronounciation. The intention of the doctrinal part being to enlighten the understanding, and to lead it to the knowledge of truth, by cool reasoning and argumentation ; all that is proper and necessary here, is that simplicity of accent and emphasis, which may serve to point out where the force of the argument lies, and no man, who is master of his subject, can greatly err in this part.

But the *practical* part of a sermon requires a very different conduct ; for the mind having been before sufficiently enlightened, and the nature and obligation of virtue clearly proved, the intention is *now* to persuade the *will* to embrace it ; to which end the passions are to be excited to come in to assist the reason. And here it is that the *pathetic allurements*

allurements of voice will be useful and proper. For experience shews us the power of the outward senses in this case ; and particularly that *action* and *motion* skilfully presented to the eye, and *musical sounds* received by the ear, produce wonderful effects on our passions and affections. It is therefore necessary, when your design is to raise fear or hope, joy or sorrow, love or hatred, to vary the action and pronounciation from cool and sedate, to that which is more warm and moving ; in order to touch the spring of that passion which you would make use of to answer your end.

To descend to particulars in this case is impossible, because the variety is infinite. The simple accents required in reasoning are few and easy, and good sense alone will direct these ; but the various modulations of the voice, which render tone and cadence harmonious, are talents of quite another kind : For these being in reality nothing but different notes in the scale of Music, require a musical ear to form and direct them ; and where this natural gift is wanting, the preacher will fall into discords, and only expose himself by his attempt.

For

For this reason, the safest way is generally, of the two extreams, to avoid that of running into too much *tone* and cadence; his defect on this side will, at the worst, only not please, but an error on the other side will disturb and displease; and it may moreover carry the appearance of affectation and self-opinion, which will expose him to contempt and censure.

I COME next to the SECOND branch of your office in the church, and that is READING THE PUBLIC PRAYERS; and I do assure you, there is no little skill required to do this as it ought to be done. I call it indeed *reading* the prayers, in compliance with the common phrase; but speaking properly, prayers ought to be *prayed*, and not *read*.

There is a certain propriety of accent, cadence and gesture, that befits the solemnity and seriousness of devotion; and where this is duly observed, the minister will find it a great help both to warm his own heart, and to draw out the attention and affections of the congregation. I do allow that prayer is a spiritual duty, and is properly the action of the soul: But experience shews us to be so made and compounded, as that our souls receive great impressions and changes from
our

our outward senses. And therefore the minister should choose those accents and gestures that are most apt and proper to excite his own devotion, as well as that of the people; he should pray to their *eyes*, and pray to their *ears*, as the readiest way to affect their hearts.

But he must at the same time carefully avoid *theatrical* accents and gestures; all affectation is offensive to good judges; but that of the *theatre* is of all others the most unbecoming the house of God, and will disgust serious persons. And yet if accents and diversification of voice be wholly rejected, the prayers will seem cold and lifeless, the attention will languish, and the devotion lose its spirit and fervor.

There is likewise a due medium to be observed in the *time* and *movement* of prayers; if they are read *too fast*, they cannot impress the soul with due sentiments and affections as the minister proceeds; on the other hand, *slow* and *heavy* reading will make the work dull and tiresome: and the impatient hearer will be apt to let loose his thoughts to wander upon foreign subjects, or perhaps compose himself to rest.

So

So that it requires some degree of judgment to steer between these extreams; and the reading of the public prayers is an art which all clergymen should set themselves to acquire by study and practice, and by copying after the best examples.

And yet I fear that it is too much neglected by those who are *newly ordained*; and that when they come first into the desk, they strike at random, and without any regard to propriety, into a certain manner of reading, which every body observes to be wrong but themselves: Time and use will soon render this familiar; and as they never discover the fault, it becomes a habit, and they never think of correcting it afterwards.

It is indeed difficult to change a bad *manner*; but difficult things may be done, and often must be done. And to make this point more easy, I will give you one short rule which may be of use both to such clergymen as are yet to form their manner, and to those who have habituated themselves to an improper one; and it is this: Let a minister, when he opens his book, possess his soul with this thought; *That he is going to address himself to the great Majesty of Heaven and Earth, who knows all his thoughts, and beholds all his actions*;

actions ; and that he is in the immediate presence of this adorable Being, who is very jealous of his honour ; I say, let him possess his soul duly with this consideration, and he will naturally fall into all the proprieties of prayer.

THE THIRD branch of your office is that of public CATECHISING.

The compilers of our Liturgy acted very prudently in making the church catechism short and summary, for fear of overburdening the memory, and rendering it distasteful and irksome. For this reason they did not support the doctrines and duties there laid down, with proofs out of the holy scripture, taking it for granted, that this part would be supplied by the pastors of the church : This has accordingly been done by many of our bishops and learned divines, in their printed expositions of the church catechism ; descending to many particular questions and answers, which naturally branch out from the general heads of that summary.

Among these I must mention and recommend one in particular, composed by that most excellent prelate (now with God) who was my immediate predecessor in this diocese and province, in whose steps I beseech God to give me grace to tread.

With

With regard to children, the chief use of catechisms is to treasure up the materials of knowledge in their memories, though they may perhaps enter very little into the sense of them : But as their understandings ripen with time, and their appetite for knowledge increases, it will be no small advantage that they have the words and sentences ready stored up for use ; for they will easily put sense to them hereafter, and then it is that a more copious exposition becomes seasonable and necessary ; however no pains should be spared for enlightening them at present according to their capacities.

And I am afraid that too many of your parishioners who are of mature age, and even some who are advanced in years, *have need to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God.* Shame will hinder such from coming to be catechised like children, but that shame will be covered by your putting in practice the method I am recommending ; for light and knowledge will be obliquely conveyed into their minds, and you will, by instructing children in their presence, instruct them at the same time, without exposing their ignorance.

In

In such parishes as afford a sufficient auditory at the evening service, this work may be then most conveniently performed, till the short days come in; but where the parishioners lie remote from the church, the morning will be the fittest time. It will indeed prolong the service for half an hour; but they who come to worship God but once in seven days, may look upon this as an easy composition; and if the minister should not grudge his pains, it will be hard if they should grudge their time, when they have no worldly business upon their hands.

If you should at the same time take occasion to explain and enforce the doctrines of *protestantism*, and of the *established church*, it might be of great use to fortify your people, and prevent apostacies, and perhaps to bring over such as may have the curiosity to be your hearers. And to speak the truth, there is no other way of effecting this properly upon reasonable creatures and christians, than the way of reasoning and conviction. Coercive laws may restrain and disable those who avow principles that are destructive to the church and state, and coercion in those cases is wise and necessary; but they can never convince any body: they may tie up
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men's hands and tongues, but never reach their hearts; this is only to be done by enlightening the mind, and working properly upon the conscience.

I must therefore, my reverend brethren, most earnestly press you to be assiduous in the discharge of this part of your office: declaring at the same time, that I shall distinguish with my regards, such ministers and curates, as shall distinguish themselves by their diligence upon this and the following head;

WHICH IS, FOURTHLY, the reviving of that almost antiquated exercise of *Expounding the holy Scriptures* to your congregations.

I am afraid the bulk of your people are very little acquainted with this *divine book*; some for want of inclination to read it, and others for want of proper helps for understanding it; and yet this is the book that *is able to make them wise unto salvation*, 2 Tim. iii. 15. *This book* is the great rule of their faith and practice, and according to this book they must be judged at the last day.

Who then should teach them to understand it but their pastors, who are called by
that

that honourable name, because they are to feed their people with knowledge and understanding? Jerem. v. 15. *For the priests lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, Mal. ii. 7.*

By this means you will by degrees lead those into the knowledge of the holy scriptures, who will not be at the pains, or may want leisure, to read them at home; or if they do read, yet, for want of commentators, are sometimes at a loss for the true sense.

Let me add, that this exercise will be of no small advantage even to yourselves, as it will lay you under a necessity of studying the word of God, which you are by profession, and promise at your *ordination*, bound to do: For a clergyman can no more be unskilful in the holy scriptures, without great shame and reproach, than a lawyer in the law.

The *Epistles* and *Gospels*, and Lessons for the day, will furnish you with choice of subjects for this work, which will become easy and familiar to the minister, after he has once made himself master of the sense and connection. And the same notes will generally

serve, as the same portions return in an annual rotation.

But let me not be misunderstood : I am not recommending this as an additional task, over and above the sermon, but to be substituted sometimes in the place of it ; and which, in my judgment, will be more profitable : especially if care be taken to make such practical inferences and applications in the course of the exposition, as may naturally arise out of the text. This will indeed make it a sermon, in another shape ; with this difference only, that the variety of subjects and incidents will enliven the attention, and give a more agreeable, as well as instructive entertainment to the audience ; who, I dare say, will come with a better appetite to this exercise, when judiciously performed, and fill your churches better.

It will remain in the minister's discretion to interpose a sermon when he pleases ; but he will do well to note down those Sundays, in order to expound in the following year those portions of holy scripture which by this means were omitted.

And if the people were admonished to bring their Bibles with them, according to the good old practice of our ancestors, and

to accompany the minister as he reads and expounds, they would understand and retain it better; and be enabled to spend an hour most profitably in recollecting and repeating to their families what they had heard at church.

If this custom, practised in the times of *Puritanism*, was laid aside in a licentious age, when all seriousness in religion grew out of fashion, let us not be ashamed to revive it; for it is no shame to learn that which is good, from any body. After all, if a sermon in form should, in compliance with custom, be found indispensable, it may however be shortened to allow for the time that had been spent in the exposition.

I COME now to the SECOND general head I proposed to speak to, *viz.* your duty at large, and out of the house of God.

THE FIRST I shall mention is the *Visitation of the sick*. And let me assure you, that this is a very critical office at certain conjunctures, and that great discretion is required for the right discharge of it; for there may be danger in administering either too much *fear*, or too much *hope*.

To awaken a sick man to reflect upon his past life, and to call his sins to remembrance, in order to a particular repentance, will be of great use to him; but care must be taken, not to throw him into despair of God's mercy and forgiveness; for this will prevent his repentance, and shut the door of mercy against him.

On the other hand, to set only the mercy of God before him, and deal out hope too liberally, will be the way to make him secure at a time when his soul is in the utmost danger, and when repentance is all that he has for it. And bye-standers will be too apt to lay hold of such sweet doctrine to their own undoing.

I am afraid it is too frequent for wicked livers, when they apprehend the approaches of death, to send for the minister, in order to receive the communion and absolution as a kind of passport, which they hope will do their business at once, and carry them by a short way to heaven; and indeed this is a very short way, if it would do. But alas! we do not find in the holy scriptures that the way is quite so easy; on the contrary, we find that repentance and a good life, are the only sure foundation of hope and com-

fort at the hour of death. For this reason a minister ought not to be too ready with his *absolutions*; nor has he any warrant for it, unless the proofs of repentance be strong, and *the sick person humbly and earnestly desire it*; in which case only, the Rubric directs absolution to be given.

And even then, it will be very proper for the minister to observe, that he has no power to forgive sins absolutely: but that all that he can do is to declare, for the comfort of the sick, that God forgives him, in case his repentance be sincere, and his heart thoroughly changed.

I confess, that when things are come to the last extremity, repentance is all that is in the power of a dying man, after a bad life: but God only knows, whether it be the meer effect of terror, or whether the heart be so changed as, in case of recovery, would have operated to a virtuous life. Charity, which *hopeth all things*, will make the best of it; but it is a very poor refuge; and as it would be cruel to refuse a dying man that little comfort which his case may possibly admit, so it would encourage presumption in the living to give too much.

But the case is quite otherwise with regard to a virtuous and godly man in his last moments; here none of these cautions are necessary, but the minister may safely pour the oil of joy and hope with profusion into his soul.

But the visitation of the sick, is only an occasional branch of a pastor's duty, and there is another of much greater importance and extent, and that is,

SECONDLY, His visiting all his parishioners at their houses in a stated and a regular course. By this means only can he learn the true state of their souls, and all their spiritual wants. In the church he is to speak, and they to hear only; but his familiar conversation will give them an opportunity of speaking in their turns, and of opening to him their doubts and scruples of conscience; their fears, their temptations, and their ignorance; and he will take fit occasions to admonish and reprove them privately, without exposing them to shame, according to our Saviour's advice. The tenderness and regard to the character and credit of an offender, must naturally tend to soften and reclaim him; but if after repeated admonitions he should prove obstinate

nate and incorrigible, then, and not till then, is he to be put to open shame. *Presentments, excommunications, judicial censures, and penances*, are always to be the last resort; when private admonitions and expostulations have been repeated without effect.

If there be domestic quarrels and dissensions, the discreet advice of the minister may heal them, and restore unity and peace, and mutual affection between husband and wife, parents and children, brethren and sisters. If reciprocal passions, or ill offices, have set neighbours and friends at variance, and given rise to vexatious prosecutions and law-suits, which are often occasioned by a meer misunderstanding of one another, (or by malicious whispers and insinuations) he will set things in a better light, and mollify them to a better temper; and bring them to decide their differences by the cheap and christian way of *arbitration*, to the saving of families from utter ruin. And indeed I have observed, that when once a minister has by his discreet, peaceable, and upright behaviour, established himself in the good opinion and confidence of his parishioners, he becomes from that time a general *arbiter*

and judge among them, and all their little strifes are readily submitted to his decision.

By the same means also he will learn if the worship of God be kept up in families, as it ought; he will discover what good books are used among them, and what bad ones, which may tend to corrupt their principles and manners. He will find if *seducers* have been privately at work in his parish, to practise on the ignorant and unstable, and lead them astray; and this will give him an opportunity to set them right, and fortify them. And I fear there was never more occasion for the vigilance of ministers in this case, than in these days, when the flock of Christ is beset with wolves of various denominations.

To name no more, he will learn from his own eye sight, the distresses and wants of the poor families in his parish, which will move him both to extend his own charity, and to solicit that of others, for their relief.

These and a thousand other good ends are to be obtained, only by the diligence of a pastor in visiting his parishioners at their houses; so that if he should content himself with officiating in the church only, and
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having barely a *face*-knowledge of them, he will leave a great part of his duty undone.

It is incredible how far this practice would go towards reforming the people, and especially those of the lower rank; for though he is doing no more than his bare duty, yet they would mistake it for a great honour and condescension on his part, to visit them familiarly in their homely cottages; and by thus gaining their hearts, he would find them soft to his good impressions, and patient under his reproofs.

I hope, therefore, my reverend Brethren, that you will be particularly assiduous in this branch of your duty: and that for the more easy and effectual performance of it, you will divide your respective parishes into convenient districts, to be visited by you in a stated course.

NEED I observe to you, in the THIRD AND LAST PLACE, that the *example* of a virtuous and holy life in a minister, will have more effect upon his people than a thousand discourses from the pulpit, be they never so excellent.

The bulk of mankind are much easier led by the eye, than the ear; and though he

should preach like an angel, yet they will despise his doctrine, if they do not read it in his life: But when he shews himself *in all things a pattern of good works*, and presents in his own life a fair copy of all those graces and virtues which he recommends from the pulpit; his people will believe him to be in good earnest, and that his sincere aim is to save their souls as well as his own. His humility, meekness, and forgiveness, his charity and moderation, his temperance and sobriety, his grave, prudent, and peaceable behaviour, his encouragement of religion and devotion in his own family, will procure reverence and authority to his person, attention to his preaching, and a zeal to imitate his virtues: They will think such a *labourer worthy of his hire*; and he must be of a very perverse temper indeed, who will not chearfully render him his dues.

I must here make one observation, which most naturally arises out of this head; and that is the indispensable duty of *residing* on your respective cures; for it is of the nature of examples to be *present*, and before the eye; so that a minister who does not live among his flock, can never be an example to them.

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I might here mention, as a lower consideration, the convenience of residence to yourselves; not only for the better improvement of your glebes, and the providing of more comfortable habitations for yourselves and successors, and being in the midst of your business; but also for avoiding all pretences of withholding from you your legal dues.

When a minister is not resident, either in person or by his curate, the parishioners are ready to plead (and indeed with too much colour) that they do not receive the *valuable consideration* of their tithes.

In strictness of law, there is no foundation for this plea, because tithes are not the *property* of the tenant or the landlord, but free *donations* to the church by the piety of ancient times; which by unlucky accidents are fallen into the hands of meer laymen, who can do no *spiritual service* for the same; and in fact, all estates subject to tithes were transmitted, or purchased, subject to this incumbrance; for which the purchaser must have paid a greater price, and the farmer a higher rent, if they had been *tithe-free*. Every man therefore must consider himself, not as a possessor in *property*, but as a *trustee* of

of the tenth part of the produce; which he holds in trust for the use of the parish-minister; and which he cannot without injustice withhold and apply to his own use, since he has no title to it.

And the case is become the same where there are lay-impropriators; and yet these receive their tithes with less grumbling and opposition, though they can neither *pray* nor *preach* as a consideration for the same.

The non-residence therefore of the minister, or even his neglects of duty, are a mere pretence set up against paying tithes; and I am afraid that if he would graciously remit his dues, too many of these clamourers would readily dispense with his residence.

But give me leave to observe, on the other hand, that if in law the minister be intitled to his tithes, the parishioners are in *good conscience*, and by the rules of the gospel, and the will of the donor, intitled equally to his spiritual cares and labours in the execution of his office for the good of their souls. If he *reaps their carnal things*, it is in consideration that he shall *sow unto them spiritual things*; and as he is *partaker of the altar*, he is required *to wait at the altar*; 1 Cor ix. 11, 13. and therefore if he
proves

proves remiss in the discharge of his duty, if he is not at hand to watch over his flock, to feed and to guard them, he must not wonder if they are untoward and difficult in the payment of their dues; for though the *law* be with him, yet they will justly set up the *equity* of the gospel against him.

I cannot dismiss this general head without putting you in mind of one duty more, which, though it be not properly canonical and within my province, yet is truly of religious consideration.

I am speaking of that provision for your families, by a prudent management of your incomes, which every man is bound by the laws of God and of Nature to make. St *Paul's* admonition in this case, is at least as binding as any canon of our church: *If any one provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, 1 Tim. v. 8.

And I am sorry to observe, that the memories of many clergymen lie under just reproach for their neglect of this duty, which the laws of God and Nature oblige every man to do. If a clergyman happens to have a temporal estate, something will remain for the support of his family who survive

vive him ; but where his benefice is his only fund, he must want natural affection and justice, or to suppose the best, he must be void of all thought, who spends it as fast as it comes in, without laying up some part of it for their support. Whether it be owing to indolence, or bad management, or to idle projects, or whether his income be expended in entertainments and high living, falsely called hospitality, though it may more properly be called pride and ostentation ; yet it makes no difference with respect to them, when there is nothing left for their subsistence.

He would disdain to be told, that the only refuge of his widow must be in some charity-house ; and that his daughters, after being delicately bred, must be quartered as humble companions upon some good lady ; where, if they are treated better than servants in point of ceremony and respect, yet their condition is so far worse, as they serve without wages ; or if this should not be their good fortune, they must be exposed to snares and temptations, and at last perhaps fall a prey to some rich invader of their virtue, for the sake of a maintenance ; I say, he would disdain to be told this, and yet he is
taking

taking the ready way to bring things to this issue. For he well knows that he is only a tenant for life, and that as he spends all while he lives, all his funds must die with him.

How much better would it be for such a one to retrench all superfluities in good time, and enter upon a new oeconomy? What if he should not treat with wine, and rival men of permanent fortunes in his entertainments? What if his wife and daughters were not to shine in silks, but be modestly clothed in decent stuffs, and the *savings* laid up for their fortunes; would any wise man think the worse either of him or them? No, his prudence and their humility would be universally applauded, and would be set up as an example to other families in the like circumstances.

I should therefore think it a most laudable resolution in every clergyman, who is not possessed of a temporal estate, to lay up one half, or one third, or at the least one quarter of his income, according as the thing will bear, for the future occasions of his family; and to look upon such *savings* as not at all his own, but *sacred* to their use.

It

IT REMAINS only that I exhort you to that which is, not so properly to be called a distinct and separate head of duty, as a mode or quality that ought to run through all the rest : I am speaking of *zeal*, or that fervent desire of doing good to the souls of your parishioners, which will animate and enliven every part of your duty. This is opposed to that *indolence* and *lukewarmness* of spirit, which always proceeds with indifference and *slothfulness in business*; which does what is barely required, and no more, and therefore generally underdoes in every thing. To such tempers every thing goes up-hill and against the grain; and is performed as if it were a *task*, which is done only because it must be done.

But a principle of *zeal* will turn our duty into delight, and make us active and diligent; it will overcome all difficulties, and spare no pains in promoting the honour of God, and the salvation of those souls that are committed to our charge. Our Saviour gives *John* the character of a *burning and a shining light*, John v. 35. *shining* by the light of his doctrine, and *burning* by the warmth and activity of his zeal; and the same should be the character of every minister of the gospel.

In order therefore to excite you to the effectual discharge of your spiritual offices with this laudable temper of mind, I shall, as I proposed, lay before you some *motives* and considerations, which, if duly attended to, cannot fail of success.

THE FIRST shall be taken from the nature of that trust, which with your own consent has been committed to you. The souls of your parishioners are your immediate charge, and you are to guide them in the way to eternal salvation. Hence it is, that the office of a minister is represented in the holy scriptures under metaphors and characters importing a very high trust.

You are called *shepherds*, who are to feed the flock of Christ, by enlightening their minds with the knowledge of divine truths; to establish their faith, and influence them to the practice of virtue. *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* says our Saviour, *Feed my sheep*, John xxi. 16. which he repeats three times. The trust is comprized in three words, but so big with important matter as might fill a volume. However, you may observe the principle and spring from whence it is inferred and inforced, *lovest thou me*; strongly implying, that wherever there is a true

true love for our blessed Saviour, it will naturally operate by a *zeal* for promoting the salvation of those souls for whom he shed his most precious blood.

As *shepherds*, you are likewise instructed to guard your flocks from spiritual enemies and dangers, especially as they are surrounded with those who will be assiduous to pervert and corrupt both their faith and manners. For this reason a good *pastor* will always have an eye upon his flock, to confirm those that are wavering, and to reclaim and recover such as have been led astray, being seduced by *cunning men, who lay in wait to deceive*; for those wolves have ever haunted about Christ's fold.

And it is in the same view and for the same purposes that you are called *watchmen*; for you are to watch over the faith and morals of your people, and guard them against infidelity, idolatry, false doctrines, corrupt religions, evil customs, and immoral practices. *Son of man*, says God to the Prophet, *I have made thee a watchman over the house of Israel*; and the end follows, namely, *to warn the wicked from his evil way*. St Paul takes up the allusion, *Heb. xiii. 17. Obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls.* And

And here I cannot but repeat the hint of the necessity of residence, which is so clearly and strongly implied in those metaphors; for an absent and rambling *shepherd* must needs neglect the safety of his flock, and a *watchman* or centinel will be punished if he leaves his post.

AND LASTLY, To name no more, you are *stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1. and dispensers of the means of salvation in his church. The church is Christ's *household* or family; and it is your office to administer their spiritual food to them, *even the sincere milk of the word*, that so they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God their Saviour.

Now these metaphors of a *shepherd*, a *watchman*, and a *steward*, express in a most significant and lively manner, the nature of that trust which is committed to every one who has taken upon him the holy character; and shew that he is responsible for the souls of his parishioners.

And as every trust must one time or other be accounted for, this leads me to the other *motive*, proper to excite you to a zealous and diligent discharge of your office; namely, That you will most certainly be called to a
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strict account for the same. This is strongly urged by *St Paul*, in the place before-mentioned, as an argument both to ministers and people to discharge their duties reciprocally; *Obey them that rule over you, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account.*

And what account will a lukewarm, slothful and negligent minister give at that day, if his unhappy parishioners should turn evidences against him, and in excuse for their own faults, plead that they miscarried through his neglect? Will he plead his obedience to the canons and rubrics, and that he performed every service which the letter of the law required? Let me assure you, my reverend Brethren, that this plea will not be admitted before the great Judge, and that the Father and Lover of souls requires much more at your hands.

Canons and Rubrics are useful instruments for keeping up *external discipline, order and decency* in an established church; and it is small merit in a clergyman to obey these, because he will be exposed to ecclesiastical censures for his neglect. But if he contents himself with this *legal observance*, and goes no further, he will be *found wanting* when he comes to be *weighed in the balance*. His
heart

heart and soul must be set upon his work ; he must give up the best of his time and pains to it, labouring *in season and out of season*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. performing many things as a volunteer, which laws do not, and cannot prescribe ; or he will never stand the inquisition of the great day, but be ranked in the number of *unprofitable servants*. This day of *reckoning* must come ; it is what you preach to others, and it is what you should seriously consider yourselves, *lest after preaching to them, you yourselves should be cast-aways*, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

But as dreadful as this day will prove to slothful and merely canonical pastors, it will be no less joyful and happy to those who have been zealous and diligent in saving the souls committed to their charge. With what pleasure will every such minister appear at the head of his happy flock before the great Shepherd, and in his own words say, *Those thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost !* The light of his doctrine, and the living light of his example, did not shine in vain even with respect to himself, before his people ; *for they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever*, Dan. xii. 3.

If any further motive were necessary, tho' one would think it should not, you may turn

to the office of *ordination*, and refresh your memories with the solemn promises you made at your admission to the order of priests; and I would earnestly advise every clergyman to read over that office once at least in every year, because stale promises are too apt to be forgotten.

Having thus, my reverend Brethren, delivered my thoughts to you, though very imperfectly, upon some of the chief branches of your sacred function, I hope you will receive them favourably, and that they will not be quite unprofitable; and especially to such of you as have not long been admitted to the cure of souls.

I shall by God's assistance endeavour to co-operate with you for promoting the great ends of your ministry; I shall rejoice to live in harmony and a good understanding with you; I shall be happy in your esteem and affection, and in giving you the best proofs of mine. If any of you should need admonition, you will remember that it is my duty to give it, and yours to take it in good part; and I hope always to give it in the spirit of meekness, and with a due regard to the dignity of your character. I shall be apt to take good impressions of you, and slow to believe things unworthy of you; and would hope that
this

this disposition of charity and benevolence will be mutual. I shall chearfully assist you, as far as I am capable, with my advice, and with my prayers in your behalf; and I hope I shall not want the benefit of your advice as there shall be occasion; and especially of your prayers, that God will enable me by his grace to discharge faithfully the great trust committed to me, for the promotion of his glory and the edification of this diocese: that so when the great Shepherd shall require an account of the flocks committed to our charge, you and I may be able to give it up with chearfulness, and *enter into the joy of our Lord.*

I shall conclude with those awful words of God to the prophet *Ezekiel* in his 33d chapter. *O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt bear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it; if he doth not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.*

F I N I S.

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Authore, JOHANNE STEARNE, S. T. D.

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Per T. B. S. Th. Prof.

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